

BOTH Wycombe Wanderers and Ilford are waiting to hear from injured players before deciding on their teams for the vital F.A. Challenge Trophy, third qualifying match at Newbury Park tomorrow (Saturday).

The injured players — Gary Hand and John Maskell of Wycombe and Andy Williams and Paul Scott of Ilford — could make quite a difference to the outcome of this, the first ever Challenge Trophy match for both clubs.

Ironically, it was Scott who committed the foul that ruled Hand out of last week's F.A. Cup first round tie against Cheltenham. Gary suffered a bad knock on the ankle and despite heroic efforts to get fit in time, manager Brian Lee decided to bring in Dave Bullock at left back last Saturday.

Hand has been receiving treatment again all this week and also did a little light training. The manager rates his chances as "50-50".

John Maskell is also doubtful, owing to a thigh injury sustained against Cheltenham. He didn't train on Tuesday and Brian Stevenson, who has played only twice in a Wanderers shirt, is standing by if John is declared unfit.

Andy Williams, brother of former Wycombe midfielder man Rob, is highly doubtful for tomorrow's game. He hurt his arm in the 3-3 draw at Wycombe a fortnight ago and hasn't played since.

Scott's injury came last Saturday at Romford and after visiting hospital on Tuesday, he also seems unlikely to make the side.

Both clubs operate squad systems and both have able replacements for the injured players. Ilford's regular goalkeeper last year, Paul James, will take Williams' place while Scott's injury means Steve Barratt comes into the team.

Tony Gibson, who played against Ilford in the last ever Amateur Cup final last season, is standing by to make his debut for the East London club at right back, having signed on recently from Bishop's Stortford. This means Peter Deadman switches from full back to centre back, alongside John Still. Peter Anderson, who spent a short spell at Loakes Park last term, is therefore out of the side, although he may be the substitute.

There is another change in the Ilford team that played at Wycombe. Roger Day, their skipper and experienced international, is now fit and played against Romford in the Cup last Saturday. Ilford won that game 2-0 with two goals in two minutes by Tony Turley and John Butterfield. Romford had one player sent off and two booked.

F.A. Challenge Trophy preview by STUART EARP

This competition is the equivalent to last year's Amateur Cup. It is competed for by the top clubs in the Southern and Northern Leagues and is undoubtedly a more difficult proposition than the Amateur Cup. The standard is considerably higher with clubs like Wigan Athletic, Stafford Rangers and Scarborough included.

What's more, no Southern club has ever won the trophy at Wembley in its five year history — it has always gone 'Up North'.

But one thing is for sure. If Wycombe are to maintain that interest they will have to be on their very best form at Ilford

tomorrow. Ilford have already been to Loakes Park this season for a Rothmans Isthmian League encounter which produced six goals.

For anyone who needs reminding, Steve Perrin put the Blues 1-0 up in the 52nd minute, only for Ilford to equalise 60 seconds later through John Still, who was later booked for time wasting. Then John Butterfield put the visitors in front after 69 minutes.

For a time it looked as though Wycombe were in danger of losing their two year unbeaten league record at home but then two goals in three minutes by Alan Phillips and Tony

Horseman put them 3-2 up and looking winners with only seven minutes remaining. Within two minutes, Ilford levelled again through Butterfield to give the match an incredible 3-3 scoreline.

Perhaps the main difference between the sides on that day was the goals. Two of Ilford's scores came from defensive errors while Wycombe worked harder and were more constructive with their three. It is unlikely that the Blues will be so generous tomorrow, but Ilford start with the advantage of home territory. Just what difference that will make remains to be seen.

Wycombe, I feel, have the skill to get through if they play at their best and much will rest on their defence. If they can hold Tony Bass, Tony Turley and the eager John Butterfield, then the Blues could well go into the fourth round. Anything less than their best is likely to see Ilford going through.

Friendly

WYCOMBE Wanderers have arranged a friendly against Swindon Town on Tuesday (7.30 k.o.) at Loakes Park. Swindon, currently second in the Football League, Division Three, have promised to send down a strong side which will be selected from the first and combination teams.